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E.O. 12958: DECL: TWENTY YEARS
TAGS: PREL PINR MARR MASS MOPS EC CO
SUBJECT: GOE INTELLIGENCE COMMISSION RELEASES REPORT ON
U.S. INFILTRATION

REF: A. QUITO 331
 1B. QUITO 358
 1C. QUITO 288

Classified By: Ambassador Heather M. Hodges for Reasons 1.4 (b&d)

-- This cable is a corrected version of QUITO 1047. --

11. (C) Summary: A GOE commission to review the Ecuadorian intelligence services, the March 1 attack by Colombian forces in Ecuador, and foreign influences in Ecuador released its findings on October 30. The commission recommended that an Intelligence Secretariat be established under the Presidency and that bilateral assistance to Ecuadorian intelligence services, under agreements that do not have the approval of the GOE, be suspended. The report also accuses the USG of involvement in the March 1 attack by suggesting the possible involvement of a Manta Forward Operating Location (FOL) plane in the operation, and claiming that the USG's prior knowledge of the operation proved that it was a joint operation. Implementation of the report's recommendations would further civilian oversight of Ecuador's military, police and intelligence services, but could also impair or prevent USG assistance to some units and reduce their effectiveness.
(End Summary)

12. (SBU) An official commission formed to conduct an assessment of Ecuadorian intelligence services and investigate the March 1 attack by Colombian security forces in Angostura, Ecuador, as well as alleged infiltration of foreign intelligence services in the Ecuadorian military and police (Refs A and B), released its official report on October 30. (The report was published on www.ecuadorinmediato.com/noticias/especial/90_923.) Minister of Defense Javier Ponce had promised to create the commission during his swearing-in ceremony on April 9, and President Correa authorized the commission by presidential decree 1080 on May 15, and appointed a ten member commission on May 19.

13. (SBU) The report discloses testimony by then-Chief of the Special Investigation Unit (UIES) of the Ecuadorian National Police (ENP), Major Manuel Silva, that he received a call in the early morning on March 1 from a member of the U.S. Embassy in Quito informing him of an operation that would take place that same morning in Ecuador's northern border

region, and that President Uribe would call President Correa later that morning to inform him directly of the operation. Major Silva asserted in his testimony to the commission that he called immediately thereafter to speak with Captain Ronny Vallejo, a close contact of President Correa, to pass the information.

Alleged U.S. Involvement in the March 1 Attack

¶4. (C) Rehashing past accusations, the report claims that a U.S. plane arrived at the Manta FOL several days before the March 1 attack by Colombia in Angostura, Ecuador, and could have been involved in the attack. The report adds that on February 23-29, night flights "vary significantly" from the previous average flight time, ending at 21:00, and that a U.S. Coast Guard HC-130 flew on those dates from 20:00 to 04:30. Specifically, it says that this aircraft departed the Manta FOL on February 29 at 19:28 local time and returned on March 1 at 04:40, and therefore operated during the time of the attack. The report asserts that the location of the aircraft 50 minutes after departure until 50 minutes before arrival is unclear. (Note: The U.S. aircraft was a U.S. Coast Guard HC-130 performing counter-narcotics sorties in the eastern Pacific (not over Ecuadorian or Colombian territory) under the operational control of JIATF-South. End Note). The report states that Ecuadorian personnel flew as host nation riders onboard all types of aircraft until 2002, at which time Ecuadorians only participated in E3 AWACS flights, due to "lack of training and informal tradition."

¶5. (C) The report also states that the ten craters found at the bomb site show that GPS-guided GBU-12 Paveway II bombs were employed in the operation, that the weight of these bombs is 611 pounds, and that Super Tucanos could not have supported this weight and would not have been used. The report concludes that since aircraft other than Super Tucanos must have been deployed, Colombia must have performed the operation with the assistance of a "second actor." Based on a technical analysis, the report further concludes that there are indications that the March 1 attack was based on a "joint operation between Colombia and the U.S."

¶6. (C) Defense Minister Javier Ponce repeated many of the conclusions of the report during a televised interview on November 10. Ponce added that Ecuador was pursuing contacts with the U.S. Congress, to "initiate a deeper investigation" into Manta FOL participation in the March 1 attack, and that there was "little expectation that the U.S. Government would recognize Manta FOL involvement in the attack." (Comment: We are not aware of any GOE contacts with the U.S. Congress to date on this issue. However, Congressman McGovern has a meeting with Ponce on November 12, and this may be the contact to which Ponce refers. End Comment).

USG Infiltration

¶7. (C) According to the report, various Ecuadorian intelligence groups, such as the national police's UIES, and military intelligence units, as well as the Antinarcotics Directorate, have been "influenced by the U.S.," as shown by their members receiving training, equipment, travel and financing. The report claims that members of the Armed Forces received financing from the CIA for the purchase of information regarding the northern border.

Recommendations to Reform Intelligence and Review Cooperation

¶8. (SBU) The commission outlines eleven recommendations to improve the intelligence system of the military and police. The commission proposes that the intelligence entities be restructured to optimize resources and achieve better control of the system. To accomplish this, the commission suggests that a new Intelligence Law be enacted that would create a new Intelligence Secretariat under the Presidency that would plan, control and direct the subsystems of the Armed Forces

and police. This organization would replace the existing Intelligence Directorate of the National Security Council (COSENIA). The commission also recommends that the UIES be dissolved, and that all international agreements that provide assistance to intelligence services, and that are not in the best interest of the government, be suspended.

Investigation of Failures in Intelligence

¶9. (SBU) The commission calls for an administrative and criminal investigation of those responsible for military intelligence, who had prior knowledge of the March 1 attack, and failed to communicate that information to civilian leadership. Defense Minister Ponce affirmed that those military personnel who worked with former Army Intelligence Director Mario Pazmino would be investigated, but said that this "would not be a witch hunt." Pazmino was named in the report as one of the officials responsible for concealing information.

¶10. (SBU) In response, Pazmino criticized the report to the press, saying that the report was obviously biased as he was never asked to provide his version of the March 1 attack or to defend himself against the commissions accusations. He stated that beyond establishing that there was an excessive economic dependence, with the consent of several Ecuadorian governments, there was no proof of CIA ties to the military or police, only judgments and suppositions.

What the Report Fails to Mention

¶11. (C) The report makes no mention that televisions, communication equipment and other items found at the March 1 attack site indicated that the FARC camp site was not provisional, likely because this would suggest that the FARC had an established presence in Ecuador. The report also does not mention a report that Pazmino claims to have delivered to Deputy Director of Intelligence General Luis Garzon on March 11, that details information on the March 1 attack, including the Ecuadorian FARC member killed during the operation, Franklin Aisalla (Ref C).

Comment

¶12. (C) President Correa had his Defense Minister make the press announcement on October 30 about the intelligence commission's report, and did not harp on the issue during his regular Saturday radio address on November 1. Although we assume he agrees with the report's conclusions, he may be keeping the issue at arm's length at this stage. We do not know if DefMin Ponce's televised comments today (Nov 10) are an indication that the GOE will be pursuing vigorously the issue of USG involvement.

¶13. (S/NF) The commission's activities and now the release of the report have complicated some working level security cooperation, especially with contacts involved in intelligence-related activity. For example, senior Ecuadorian police leadership has told DHS that they would like to continue cooperation, but lower the profile in public. Cooperation with RA's vetted police unit will likely be suspended. Striking new bilateral agreements for future security-related cooperation could become more complicated, at least in the short term.

HODGES